Strengthening Strategic Enrolment Management Integration Through Effective Organizational Change Management

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Abstract

Higher institutions face increasing pressures to transform existing strategic enrolment strategies to offset mounting internal and external influences within the educational marketplace. With organizations dramatically reconceptualizing the classroom and instructor-student mandated interaction, internal resistance has significantly impacted enrolment initiatives' success and compounded institutional struggles. This paper discusses how institution-wide strategic enrolment planning can only achieve desired goals when organizational change management has been established and entrenched in the institution's identity. With a focus on educational service quality and decreasing financial solvency, this paper recommends prioritizing a ground-up strategy promoting a culture of change. Change management instills readiness in all levels, creating organizational nimbleness. With nimbleness, each level can adapt to the enrolment management system's frequently evolving policies and ensure long-term institutional success in an increasingly competitive education market and intensifying student recruitment challenges.

Keywords: enrolment management, strategic planning, change management, readiness, student recruitment

Introduction

Higher education institutions exist in a market that is increasingly saturated and competitive. Traditional education structures have been systematically challenged by environmental factors, changing the dynamics within the marketplace. Historically, higher education institutions have been slow to respond or adapt, relying on existing strategies to combat shifts in demands; however, current conditions have seen immense pressure from demographic changes, tuition revenue declines and changing social beliefs towards post-secondary need that now threatens numerous institutions' stability. The current cohort of students, Generation Z, is defined by their demand for instant results and hesitation towards traditionalistic strategies that focus on generalist skill development. Changing student needs, decreasing enrolment, and an increasing number of alternative education sources have left many traditional institutions searching for methods to remain solvent. Growing numbers of organizations have implemented strategic enrolment management policies to recruit and retain students, often to marginal success. Frustrations and internal conflict develop as tension within institutions intensifies, leading to resistance to developed strategies. Without internal support, Strategic enrolment campaigns continue to achieve diminished results through

misguided or ill-planned strategies that focus entirely on driving change, not how to adapt to the change. Leadership continues to promote Strategic enrolment initiatives, understanding the importance of its success; yet, communication and collaboration isolated occurrences.

Strategic enrolment policies require on-going change and adjustment to serve their student-centric model best. Higher education institutions have developed a culture that is reliant on stability and maintaining the status quo. Strategic enrolment integration requires nimbleness within the institution to adapt and incorporate new dimensions to optimize student needs and improve institutional branding. Institutional nimbleness is best achieved by the development of organizational change management. Change management promotes change acceptance through collaboration at various higher education institution levels, providing the skills and tools for projects to succeed. Organizational change management is primarily focused on the people element of change, reducing the barriers that create resistance and advocating readiness across all institution levels. Change management empowers individuals and groups to scrutinize internal and external conditions, interpret threats, evaluate alternatives, and promote change. Effective incorporation of change management in a higher education institution dramatically improves enrolment policies' viability as it instills the necessary flexibility from the bottom-up. As policies are continuously shaped and altered, change management is the framework that fosters change acceptance allowing for systematic integration of enrolment management to thrive.

This paper seeks to introduce and discuss current pressures facing effective strategic enrolment management success in higher education institutions. Changed by internal and external factors, the paper first outlines existing challenges encountered by enrolment initiatives and reasons why institutional adaption faces increased resistance by instructors and staff. To counter identified institutional complexities, the paper will propose the importance of organizational change management in the higher institutional model and its benefit for enrolment management. The author identifies two specific areas of great concern in the current educational market, service quality perception and operational costs, linking a successful institutional-wide strategy with effective integration of both change management and enrolment management systems. The paper concludes with six recommendations for institutions to strengthen existing operational enrolment strategies through change management.

Key Terminology and Acronyms

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	Post-Secondary Education Institutions
Generation Z (zoomers)	Students born (loosely) between 1998-2010. Considered the first truly digital natives, being exposed to digital devices and media for their entire life.
Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM)	Strategies to accomplish directives set by institutions' missions and student need through targeted recruitment, retention, academic learning, and loyalty plans.

Organizational Change Management (OCM)	Methods of incorporating acceptance of change to promote success of strategic operations. Focuses on how instructors and departments are influenced by change and creates a community (internally-driven) strategy to support nimbleness.
Institutional Nimbleness	An institution or department's ability to quickly react to change and incorporate appropriate responses to environmental and internal needs.

Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM)

Strategic enrolment management (SEM) is a comprehensive organizational focus seeking to maximize student success through an institutional mission-linked strategic plan. Initial constructs of SEMs focused primarily on recruitment methods through model development. As enrolment models adapted over time, SEM's role expanded to incorporate additional core principles beyond recruitment, embracing activities as promoting student academic growth, program delivery, improved student services, and financial planning. Although principle constructs of SEM gravitate towards optimizing enrolment, HEIs have started to establish an SEM institutional structure that stresses team diversity that acknowledges faculty is crucial in an efficient design. Copeland (2009) remarked that research promotes full multi-levelled SEM integration; yet, many institutions have poorly executed SEM systems due to ineffective designs based on outdated philosophical strategies. Substandard SEM models and institutional gaps are connected to varying definitions of SEM and its established institutional-designed focus. Dolence (1997) characterized SEM as a set of operational procedures developed to optimize recruitment, retention, and student success through an academic context. It generates demand through marketing campaigns and a synergistic institutional strategy that cultivates a collaborative environment facilitating students' needs with student services, the faculty, and institutional leadership. Henderson (2005) asserted that without an academic context to the SEM system, institutions create a ·silo culture· that is devoid of cross-department support and only focuses on short-term growth through a singular purpose mission.

Challenges of SEM Implementation

The implementation of a multi-levelled SEM system is complex and associated with numerous challenges. Difficulties can exist internally and externally, leading to criticisms about SEM's necessity and the actual overall benefits of a costly institutional-wide operation. Issues focus on the required technical systems and support staff associated with SEM, the development of inappropriate programs, ineffective marketing strategies, poorly managed administrative systems, and the recruitment of lower quality students (Hyde, 2018). These complexities often generate finger-pointing and blaming for perceived failings, identifying immense time requirements associated with meetings and planning sessions, complicated integration of SEM strategies with institutional missions, detailed data-driven requirements, and costly SEM designs and structure. The pressure to achieve desired outcomes that impact

the entire HEI compounds the SEM implementation. Continuously changing internal and external factors intensifies SEM teams' tension, imposing additional concerns towards outcome uncertainty. Increasing numbers of HEIs incorporate SEM out of necessity, a last ditched attempt to improve severely deteriorated conditions. HEIs that are already facing considerable enrolment declines, reduced tuition revenue, and increasing financial solvency issues may unfairly rely on instantaneous returns with marginal time and financial investment. Performance improvements require commitment and effective leadership, proactively identifying internal and external risk while encouraging shared responsibilities towards an SEM culture (Black, 2010).

A well-structured, organized HEI with firmly integrated SEM possesses an institutional culture that views student recruitment, student retainment, and student achievements as a shared function. Influential SEM culture seeks to develop and cultivate student relationships along the entire student life cycle, from entry to conferment, idealizing the sharing of accurate knowledge. SEM culture requires interconnection among departments and teams; however, HEI academic culture is entrenched with a desire for autonomy. This autonomy can exist at an individual and group level, as decisions are singularly focused on achieving program or class needs (Weerts, 2019). Faculty additionally gravitates towards standardization that is based on established principles that act as a form of normality. SEM is a contradiction to those established conceptualizations, as it continually strives for improvement through change. SEM is student-driven, where policies, procedural and structural, are developed to enhance the student experience and strengthen institutional desirability through reputational branding. Faculty and staff are still allowed an active voice and degrees of freedom, although the traditionalistic foundations of faculty first or leadership-centered are counter to the SEM model. SEM requires all HEI levels to share a vision and actively participate in executing the necessary steps.

Internal factors within the HEI can impair SEM effectiveness, as leadership needs to have the appropriate strength to promote the correct collaborative framework necessary to overcome obstacles. External factors can bewilder the SEM design, sending shock and unease through the entire organization. Sigler (2017) noted that numerous external factors could surprise well-structured HEIs; however, sudden shifts in student demographics, government policies, and course demands lead to the feeling of hopelessness as it demands dramatic reformulations of existing procedural and structural planning. Students continue to be the most significant cause of SEM change as the entire process is student-centric. Current cohorts belong to the Generation Z grouping, born between 1998-2010. Social media's existence and accessibility drive their entire life; thus, results are demanded immediately and mostly perceived as a transactional exchange. Financial conservatism is an additional element used to describe Generation Z students, examining the educational process's cost-versus-reward elements. Student satisfaction is strongly derivative of providing the best service and resources for the least amount of direct costs, applying pressure on existing institutions to reduce overhead. Student-as-consumers require more direct engagement by the administration, building trust and reducing anxiety through increased mentoring, advising, and job placement support. These changing demands are costly and require dramatic shifts in the faculty-student and administration-student relationships, linking them directly with student attrition or transfer

(Penny, 2018). The demands for course customization and personalization in educational pathways and instruction are cost intense and human-resource taxing. The challenge of promoting a personalized educational experience is a complete conceptualized redesign that has hindered traditional institutions and introduced new generation educational competitors that are specifically skill-oriented and virtually designed to the education market.

HEIs have additionally been overwhelmed with pronounced demographic changes both domestically and abroad. Enrolment has been declining, related to young adults shifting priority from traditional four-year model universities towards skill-developing post-secondary school programs. Graduating high school students are becoming more reluctant about direct entry into traditional HEIs, as growing costs and fear of economic security create hesitation. Post-secondary readiness continues to decline among registered first-year students; as increase HEI saturation occurs, entry standards gradually shift to accommodate institutional needs for specific enrolment targets, appointed to maintain financial stability. Benchmarks in sciences, maths, and language skills have declined, leading to increased difficulties for students to adapt and complete required course objectives (Conley, 2008). Schools need to incorporate additional support mechanisms to aid student development, applying considerable financial pressure on the HEI. Faculty are additionally burden by modifying criteria and course designs to meet a lower proficiency, impacting the service quality and knowledge exchange. Increased academic deficits also correlate with student attrition and reduced student persistence, reducing SEM controls' effectiveness. Financial demands have pushed educational costs to points that far outpaces individual economic growth, further driving enrolment numbers down (Youmans, 2017). The cyclical nature of external issues entrenches student declines, as reduced enrolment increases demand on students with academic deficiencies, resulting in additional programs and support systems needed to build student capabilities to achieve success in the HEI. These additional demands apply significant economic pressure, requiring institutions to increase tuitional costs to offset growing demands (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2011). The inflated tuition fees further reduce student engagement, resulting in a further shift in academic requirements to ensure solvency. With HEIs effectively pricing themselves out of the market, dramatic change is necessary for long-term institutional viability.

Organizational Change Management (OCM)

Institutional change is necessary as educational conditions, internal and external, evolve, requiring astute alterations to associated mechanisms to remain competitive in increasingly saturated markets. Organizational change management (OCM) represents policies and practices that deal with dynamic cultural factors associated with change (AACRAO, 2020). In an educational context, OCM is the prescriptive technique to execute initiatives emphasizing the 'how' not the 'what'; how to efficiently prepare the human infrastructure to incorporate change, foreseen and unforeseen, into strategic management projects. Effective management is directly associated with the understanding that conditions are never static; higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly affected by globalization and the necessity to adapt to dynamic market conditions that require institution-wide coordination. Institutions that instil the appropriate organizational strategy realize that organizational change is fruitless without the necessary support fostering change acceptance in faculty and staff. When HEIs confront institutional challenges that require dramatic organizational re-positioning, forced adaption

policies fail to gain the necessary support due to inner-organizational resistance to change, ultimately sabotaging full integration. Successful HEIs develop readiness skills in their faculty and staff, building the necessary values, attitudes, and culture to embrace change through confidence in leadership's direction (Atasoy, 2020).

Types of Change Management in Education

When HEIs are confronted with situations requiring institutional reorganization, the degree of engagement corresponds with the necessity of change within operations. Not all operational changes require large-scale adaption, but rather a specific component change within the system itself. Effective OCM seeks appropriate modification of institutional elements to achieve the desired outcome. Burke (2017) identified three distinct; yet, intertwined organizational levels that focus on specific elements of change adoption: the individual level, the group level, and the large-system level. Although a change to a specific level does not equate to change totality, group-level changes have an interrelation with individual level, and large-scale institutional changes require, at least in part, interconnectivity between the groups and individuals. The priority to the level directly correlates with the operational goals set out by leadership, with tasks targeting areas that best serve the OCM's agenda.

Individual change management is focused on creating and executing strategies to promote an organizational change for a new direction. Although effective OCM policies at the individual level are necessary for institution-wide reconceptualization, most changes strengthen faculty readiness and institutional competitiveness, opposed to total operational change (Burke, 2017). At its core, individual-level focused OEM seeks to develop, recruit, train, and retain the necessary staff to facilitate more significant change. HEIs must understand how their staff confronts change and what mechanisms are best utilized to promote the necessary change when demanded.. Effective individual-level OCM requires HEIs to be conscious of existing organizational conceptions and the potential consequences of the intended change on a targeted group. The conveying of clear goals and providing support to alleviate fears is necessary to promote successful change (Aiken & Keller, 2009).

The importance of group-level change management in HEIs is becoming more significant with the increased acceptance of collaborative and transformational leadership. Martin (2006) noted that group change management consists of institutions identifying which groups or teams are directly impacted by the change and how that change will affect performance or concept integration. With numerous HEIs incorporating increased priority on group empowerment through reduced organizational hierarchy and direct supervision, the emphasis on explicit instruction and goals becomes significantly more critical to ensure productivity. As environmental demands change, the integration of members with different skills may be required to support the organizational change initiatives successfully. Institutional leaders need to evaluate the situational need and balance the need for group cohesiveness to maintain optimal performance through group reorganization.

Large-scale organizational change is rarely taken as the initial step by HEIs, as systematic changes are necessary at the ground levels. Total organizational change is complicated; numerous elements must cohesively work together for the policies to be wholly integrated into

system operations. When concepts are embraced, movement can occur; this could consist of new technology incorporation (flipped classes, online learning platforms), student retention methods (pedagogical shifts), or HEI mission focus (program and departmental redesigns). Large-scale change is transformational; it focuses on HEI mission, leadership, and institutional culture; it seeks to either be revolutionary or evolutionary to the entire HEI operation. However, HEIs are slow to embrace total operational change, holding the belief that difficulties will pass with a strengthening of existing core values and structures. The apathy to large-scale institutional change reinforces resistance at individual and group-levels, limiting total OCM capabilities.

Change in Higher Education Institutions

Change in HEIs can precipitate from various triggers manifesting from internal and external sources, prompting action at any componential level. Prompted to act, HEIs may develop and enact procedural or structural changes to counter perceived issues or to adapt to conditions that would make the institution more competitive. Internal change is driven by the individual (departmental leaders or faculty) or groups (management teams) to combat inefficiencies within operations to manage environmental changes that limit the institution's function. Internal change agents bridge the HEI with the external environment (students, industry), identifying potential complexities that exist through daily interaction and the performance of designated tasks. When issues manifest, internal agents promote procedural changes that mitigate disturbances to operations through improved daily governance policies (Van Loon, 2001). Pedagogical approaches or leadership structures (collaborative vs. transactional) are frequently reviewed and assessed on effectiveness; internal agents drive discussion and suggestions to modify or restructure existing systems to serve assigned functions best. External change in HEIs commonly associates with situations driven by institutional stakeholders (students, government) and competitors. Large-scale structural changes propel HEIs to redesign pre-existing schemes and philosophical underpinnings to best adapt to external forces that create a crisis of function. Labianca et al. (2009) claimed that long-term institutional viability is derived from an HEIs ability to reframe existing ideological structures to offset external demands and maintain capabilities that strengthen brand reputation. Although dramatic unforeseen external change can generate a period of shock and uncertainty, strong institutional OCM and support culture enables relevant procedures to form and tackle unexpected conditions.

While considerable focus concentrates on OCM's calculated efforts to create procedural or structural change within HEIs, change can exist somewhat impulsively through informal relationships between the institution, predominately faculty, and students. The informal change that occurs is not superficial but necessary for altering subtle elements of procedures and structure to appropriately fit conditions that were not initially perceived in the SEM initiative. The role of students, or external stakeholders, in implementing change is vital as they are the customer in the HEI experience (Higgins et al., 2012). Although individual and group-level change may improve group cohesion that seems unrelated to the institution's in-class or service-oriented aspects, the informal process pushes boundaries of original conceptions to incorporate change in other unconscious manners. Centralized directives from authorities in HEI management may provide creditability to change initiatives within the organization; however, including OCM teams representing various departmental and faculty areas promote

a more effective situational awareness of potential crisis an HEI could experience. With management legitimization of faculty and student input in developing OCM policy design, the HEI culture will have a strategic advantage in modifying policies to external sources' evolving requirements (Helvaci & Kiliçoğlu, 2018).

OCM's Impact on SEM Integration

Market factors driven by environmental shifts impact all levels of HEI. Institutions that lack structured OCM systems overlook subtle changes in conditions, eventually causing issues to become systemic. Individuals, groups, and HEI leadership often deflect obligations, waiting for another entity to take the lead before performing any meaningful action when OCM accepting culture does not exist. Operations that are purely reactive to change conditions fail to optimize their SEM integration, resulting in limited results. To incorporate SEM's strategic function, individuals, groups, and HEI leadership need the appropriate skills and awareness to evaluate changing conditions, determine perceived implications, and initiate an appropriate response (Hornor, 2020). An efficient OCM provides the framework for this awareness, empowering all levels to monitor elements within their operations, seeking alternative methods to achieve tasks that otherwise would be stifled through pre-existing standard operating procedures. The current post-secondary education market struggles with persistent disruptions to their SEM integration, limiting growth potential. Pervasive barriers associated with institutional service quality declines, increasing operational costs, and diminishing returns inhibit many HEIs, leading to a cycle of decline. While it is impossible to avoid disturbances resulting from the change, a well-designed OCM system will improve SEM's acceptance through an existing culture of change readiness.

Institutional Service Quality Issues

The empowerment of students as a consumer, created by market saturation and educational mobility, has resulted in HEIs attempting to incorporate all student demands into their SEM system's core. While student-centric SEM prioritizes adaption to student needs, it does not require a blind embrace of every student's request. Institutional missions need to remain focused on the basic tenets of education, where HEIs facilitate knowledge exchange to foster critical thinking and discussion to promote a skilled populace. Listening to student desires and acknowledging their wants helps generate a positive administration-student relationship; however, wants do not equate to need, and a balance between the two must occur. Service quality declines are not associated with providing everything wanted but effectively aligning curriculum, teaching practices, services, and support to what students need. Institutional prioritization on wants over needs creates a decline in service quality that ravages institutional SEM growth while increasing unnecessary costs.

To improve SEM service quality issues at OCM's individual level, the institution needs to confront conditions faculty, staff, and students experience daily. Achievement deficiencies reduce the student and faculty's opportunity to provide meaningful knowledge exchange (Hornor, 2020). Individual academic gaps are often noticed too late by instructors as they are overwhelmed with increasing class sizes and service demands. Faculty-to-student ratios need to decrease, allowing for improved interaction. With decrease demands within individual classrooms, training can be provided to educators to improve red-flag awareness. As retention

is economically more beneficial to SEM operations, providing faculty with the means to identify changes in behaviour and performance can stem attrition. Faculty will also be empowered to provide the necessary insight to OCM teams, guiding curriculum and program changes to meet the students' needs (Sigler, 2017). Instructional delivery can be continuously assessed through OCM and adapted through faculty intervention. Faculty at the individual OCM level becomes linked to the SEM's success, improving educator-efficacy and student achievements through personalization.

At OCM's group level, cross-functional teams' development to identify students-at-risk or conditions limiting student success creates the mechanism for collaboration and change. Working with student support, instructors and staff can communicate about student issues impacting overall academic persistence (Stanton et al., 2017). OCM at the group level focuses on the interventions necessary to ensure students receive support across all departments. Large-scale sweeping changes at the institutional level may be necessary for service quality and SEM to improve. HEIs need to create and sustain institutional-wide quality standardization. The HEI standardized approach to education would incorporate students, faculty, and departments' concerns and opinions to ensure quality demands are met. With codifying educational policies that are standard across departments, students can experience similar conditions and demands. To reduce reaction time to change, each department will design an action committee to report conditions to the institutional level to incorporate policy. HEI leadership needs to be flexible, not imposing will or directives at the expense of student need, but ensuring all students experience the same post-secondary experience.

Operational Costs

Increased competitive pressures and reduced enrolment numbers in post-secondary education have severely impacted HEI's economic stability. Ill-designed SEM models cast a wide net hoping to attract significant numbers of students but exasperate financial resources. Students' changing demands require significant shifts that are financially taxing (Youmans, 2017) but provide marginal increases in total enrolment and satisfaction indicators. The desperation by HEIs to attract students has a knock-on effect at the student, faculty, and institutional level; as service quality decreases as HEI's reputation decline. SEM develops into a tool to attract all students rather than attracting the appropriate ones, further reducing long-term stability. As institutions prioritize economic stability, the mission shifts from a public good towards a private one. The conceptual redesign, intended or unintended, prioritizes education as a commodity over education as public service (Gumport, 2000). With the commercialization of the educational system, the drive for knowledge evolves into the need for specific skills.

To alleviate stress and unrealistic goals on an HEI's SEM, change management needs to proactively assess areas requiring development or redesign within the institution (Flanigan, 2016). At the individual level, institutions perform satisfaction questionnaires or performance reviews to determine areas of need from the student point-of-view. Discussions with faculty and staff can identify areas of wasted potential or excessive expenditure. It is the alignment of both student reviews and staff discussion to develop the initial changes to daily operations. Shifts in SOP within the classroom or department would require the appropriate training, allowing staff to become knowledgeable in areas of need and to minimize wasted resources. Reviews of

services offered can additionally streamline operations to serve the students better while reducing excessive overhead. Groups and departments should strive to create unexpected value within the institution. By re-imagining course direction or applying new context to programs, groups and departments can distinguish themselves from competitors (Christensen et al., 2015). To merely fix problems, SEM policies look outward for answers and rarely look internally for constructive strategies that meet the institution's unique needs. OCM needs to evaluate ways to distinguish the class, department, and institution from others, utilizing this uniqueness in the SEM campaigns.

SEM models do not need to rely on traditional markets to be successful; identifying opportunities through service expansion can reduce the HEI's financial toll. OCM teams can determine if creating additional programs, redesigning departments, or modifying course objectives align with institutional capabilities and SEM tools. Institutional level change in recruitment focus brings numerous complexities but potential rewards through additional revenue streams. SEMs can focus on secondary markets like adult education or industry training and seminars to improve financial conditions, while OCM creates the necessary mechanisms at the individual and group levels to appropriately integrate these services. Additional programs to non-traditional education consumers may reduce financial hardships; however, collaboration and strategies need to occur at all institution levels for it to be successful. Faculty and staff need to be provided the correct training and resources, groups need to be created to ensure standardization and SOPs are followed, and the HEI needs to incorporate the appropriate resources for effective operations. Creating new programs or services needs to be weighed against the associated costs and risks at all levels.

Strategic Enrolment and Change Management in Thailand

Thai universities face immense institutional pressure resulting from pronounced demographic changes due to a rapidly aging society (United Nations, 2015). The decreasing number of prospective students has evolved education from a public good to a hyper-competitive market. Challenges in the educational landscape, Thai institutions have initiated strategic policies to improve perceived reputation through new research and program offerings, extracurricular activities, student development services, academic support, and improved classroom standards (Sarawanawong et al., 2009). Private institutions are increasing their focus on international recruitment to offset declining domestic numbers, principally focused on Chinese international students. The increases in investment, emphasis on institutional branding, and increased priority on international students have financially stabilized some schools; however, internal and external pressures mount on existing strategic enrolment's long-term appropriateness and sustainability.

Adaption by faculty in Thailand has been slow in many areas, with knowledge codification and transfer among staff and departments being extremely limited (Sarawanawong et al., 2009). Technological acceptance, program reforms, and curriculum standards vary considerably from institution to institution, department from department. Faculty in Thai universities embrace a standardized approach that rarely alters classroom dynamics, promoting a traditional

instructor-centric methodology (Crocco, 2018). The considerable faculty-student age gap intensifies expectation demands that increase attrition rates (Sittichai, 2012). Cultural differences are becoming more evident with increasing numbers of Chinese students; Thai instructors and students have difficulty incorporating lived experiences in the curriculum that embrace a multicultural classroom.

To improve conditions, Thai schools have started to interweave change management through training and faculty recruitment. There has been increased motivation by departments to integrate technology, especially during the pandemic, to meet the students' needs. Institutions are creating cooperatives with regional industry leaders to formulate strategies to improve curriculum to meet market needs. To improve their multicultural understanding and footprint, increased engagement in foreign faculty recruitment and international research exchanges have been forged (Pornsalnuwat, 2014). Strategic enrolment policies have improved with increased change initiatives at the faculty level, providing support for new class dynamics and program support. While growth still needs to occur in cross-departmental exchange, faculty and team integration policies have bridged some existing gaps (Nakornthap, 2018). Thai universities have improved their financial support for students through improved bursary and scholarship programs through faculty and department outreach. The building of a community, opposed to singular departments within an institution, indicates change management can occur in Thai educational environments, and these changes support SEM programs.

Conclusion

Disruptions to SEM can quickly develop a culture of hesitation, driving a form of policy flailing. OCM culture is critical during major environmental shifts to the SEM structure, as it creates institutional nimbleness – the ability to identify, respond and reflect to change quickly. Without nimbleness, institutions remain in their comfort zone and fail to drive institutional innovation to confront the changes. Institutions need to evolve to remain competitive; a strong OCM recognized the degree of evolution necessary to remain competitive. These changes are then reflected in the SEM, projecting the institutional strength to potential students. OCM culture allows for integration and acceptance of SEM; it determines through careful reflection on all levels whether the necessary changes required adaption of current conditions or full-scale innovation. While external factors are beyond the control of HEIs, market vulnerability through demographic shifts, funding issues, or increased competition can be marginalized with a strongly developed OCM supporting the SEM. Being aware of potential problems and how it not only affects SEM but institutional competitiveness is the benchmark of a strong OCM. Change requires an understanding of the past and a look to the future to ensure long-term success.

This article has proposed practices of strengthening SEM through OCM. The following will assist with HEI effectiveness related to change towards SEM systems:

- ☐ Develop a robust OCM culture that promotes readiness and adaptability at all three levels of the institution, effectively preparing the human infrastructure for change.

☐ Establish and idealize a collaborative environment that promotes information exchange and support at the individual, group, and institutional levels. Cross-team collaboration is crucial in identifying students at risk and applying the appropriate intervention to support needs.

☐ Establish individual ownership for SEM's success through clear communication and engagement at all OCM levels.

☐ Prioritize student needs over wants, aligning SEM policies to the HEI's core tenet promoting knowledge exchange and critical thinking.

☐ Ensure the institution has substantial nimbleness, flexibility to overcome environmental changes that directly impact SEM operations.

☐ Create unexpected value by analysing strength at all three levels. Develop methods that allow the institution to differentiate itself from competitors, including problems solving strategies that do not only conform to pre-existing styles.

Further Research

Although SEM and OCM structure has existed for a considerable time, very little research exists in the Asian context, especially in the private post-secondary sector. Further investigations should be conducted with changing demands and conditions related to external events (COVID-19, Government Financial Support). To determine what methods have proven successful and what areas need further redesign in the new normal. With increasing financial pressures and shifting consumer demands, wide-spread institutional failure will damage the regional reputation as an effective service provider. Research in this area can provide the foundation for HEIs at different stages of OCM and SEM integration.

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